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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (c) (ii) and (iii) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: participation and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women; women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; American Psychological Association, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, International Association of Schools of Social Work, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, World Federation for Mental Health, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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We, the members of the non-governmental organization (NGO) Committee on Mental Health, international and national NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, enthusiastically endorse addressing the two thematic issues of the 2003 forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

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(1) participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women, and (2) women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

The mission of the NGO Committee on Mental Health is the promotion of psychosocial well-being, the improvement of mental health-care services and advocacy and education in the prevention of mental illness. The Committee works with the United Nations and its specialized agencies to ensure the inclusion of mental health issues within a broader context of concerns such as vulnerable populations, human rights, poverty, violence, the environment, peace and well-being.

A gender perspective on mental health and human rights is informed by the fact that women are at the highest risk throughout the world, in large measure owing to second-class status, systemic discrimination and harmful traditional practices that institutionalize such oppression.

Violence against women, in all its forms, both private and public, has long been a devastating manifestation of this denial of basic human rights that precludes full human development and well-being.

The media exacerbate discriminatory stereotypes by the dehumanizing objectification of females, as well as by sensationalizing and eroticizing violence that normalizes and legitimates such abuses. We call upon the media to use their enormous power to shape minds more responsibly and equitably by educating the populace with an increased awareness of gender equity issues that are prerequisites of human rights, human development and sound mental health.

We support and call upon the United Nations, its Member States, this important Commission and NGOs actively to promote and facilitate critical actions in the international arena that improve the status of women, empowering them to their rightful, fullest human potential.